



March 14, 2007

TO: Transportation Authority of Marin Executive Committee

FROM: Dianne Steinhauser, Executive Director

RE: Selection of Safe Routes to Transit Candidates, Agenda Item 8

Dear Commissioners:

Executive Summary

The Transportation and Land Use Coalition (TALC) and the East Bay Bicycle Coalition (EBBC), working in conjunction with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has issued a second Call-for-Projects to distribute \$4 million in Regional Measure 2 Funds as part of the Safe Routes to Transit Program. This program seeks to improve bicycle and pedestrian access to regional transit facilities that have a “bridge nexus.” In the first round of funding for this program Marin County applicants were shut out and program funding was awarded elsewhere. To avoid repetition of this outcome, staff is suggesting Executive Committee discussion of a TAM role in formulating and implementing a successful application strategy.

Recommendation: That the Executive Committee provide guidance to staff on TAM’s role in prioritizing and submitting applications for the RM2 Safe Routes to Transit program; that the Executive Committee hence provide direction on which applications TAM staff should prepare for the SR2T program.

Background

Funded by passage of the \$1 state bridge toll increase contained in Regional Measure 2 (RM2), the Safe Routes to Transit (SR2T) Program provides \$20 million over 10 years for bicycle and pedestrian projects improving access to regional transit facilities. The East Bay Bicycle Coalition (EBBC), and the Transportation and Land Use Coalition (TALC) were selected to work with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to coordinate funds and administer calls-for-projects for the SR2T program. Candidate projects must have a “bridge nexus,” meaning that they provide better access for transbay transit passengers, fully integrating pedestrian and bicycle modes .

\$4 Million of the funds were made available for a first round of projects selected in 2005. While Marin jurisdictions prepared applications on behalf of several candidates for the 2005 funds, none of these applications were successful. A second \$4 million call-for-projects has now been issued with an application deadline of April 3. Because Marin is a major contributor to the toll stream on the Richmond–San Rafael Bridge, TAM staff contends that the county deserves a share of the funding in this program. Since the selection criteria contain no specific requirements for geographic equity, however, Marin has no guarantee of success in this process unless an

effective application strategy is formulated. With that in mind, staff seeks Executive Committee guidance on several key strategic questions.

Discussion

Instead of separate submittals by local jurisdictions, some have suggested that TAM be the lead agency in a coordinated effort to determine the best one or two candidates to be submitted from Marin County into this program. While TAM has taken the lead on previous efforts to submit candidate projects to federal or state grant programs, this has sometimes received lukewarm reception from local government jurisdictions in the County. TAM staff seeks guidance on whether it is suitable for the TAM Board to take a lead role in submitting or supporting applications for this regional grant program. The TAM Board can consider a number of options:

- TAM submits the application in cooperation and coordination with the local entity responsible for the project, prioritizing candidates for all of Marin County
- TAM supplies a letter of support in response to a request by the local agency submitting the application for program funds.
- The local agency submits applications for the grant program, with TAM having no specific role. Processes for a number of other federal and state grant programs follow this option.

While TAM will be discussing further its ongoing role in these type of efforts at the TAM Board Workshop on April 7th, responses to the SR2T solicitation are due April 3rd, meaning prior discussion is timely.

If the Executive Committee and/or the TAM board directs staff to assume a specific proactive role in the SR2T grant program, the strategic questions of which projects and how many should be advanced remain. To assist in answering these questions, staff brings to the Board's attention three candidate projects for consideration. TAM staff asks Executive Committee guidance on which candidates staff should be developing or coordinating development of applications.

1. City of Fairfax - Center Blvd Transit Center improvements. This project enables better bicycle, pedestrian and ADA access in and out of the transit bus hub at the Fairfax Parkade. This is supported by the City of Fairfax.
2. City of San Rafael – Mission to Heatherton bike/ped facility improvements. This closes the gap created when the Lincoln Hill Path is complete (part of the Hwy 101 Puerto Suello Hill Gap Closure project). The project carries bicyclists & pedestrians to the Bettini Transit Center on Heatherton from where the Class 1 path ends at Mission. This is supported by the City of San Rafael and could secure a 50% local match from Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot Program (NTPP) funds, if the project remains after initial NTPP TAC recommendations receive public input, Department of Public Works final packaging, as well as Board of Supervisor approval.
3. Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Access Improvements. MTC is completing a Project Study Report (planning study) examining options for providing a bike/pedestrian pathway on the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge. The next phase of work, Environmental Documentation and Design could start as early as this June. TAM would apply for necessary support funds from the SR2T program. The grant would be considered Marin's contribution to the Richmond-San Rafael Access efforts. This application could be supported by MTC and the Bay Area Toll Authority , BATA. (Note a meeting is scheduled with MTC on this issue Monday March 12th and will be reported to the Exec Committee on Wednesday March 14th.)

Recommendation: That the Executive Committee provide guidance to staff on TAM's role in prioritizing and submitting applications for the RM2 Safe Routes to Transit program; that the Executive Committee hence provide direction on which applications TAM staff should prepare for the SR2T program.